

# **SOCIALIST STUDIES**

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## **SOCIALISM NEEDS YOU! AND YOU NEED SOCIALISM!**

### **The Problem**

Without Socialists there can be no Socialist political organisation and no Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain needs members in order to carry out Party work. We need writers, speakers and distributors of our journal, Socialist Studies, and other Party literature. We need committed Socialists who reject capitalism and accept the urgent need for a new society based upon production for direct social use, not for profit. And we need members who accept and will be prepared to defend the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

### **The Solution**

The solution is simple. If you agree with our analysis of capitalism, the Socialist objective and the political means required to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society, then you are already a Socialist. But individual Socialists cannot alone make a marked impact upon Capitalism. The struggle for Socialism has to be an organised one and this requires collective action by the working class.

This is why a Socialist political party is vitally important. It focuses attention on the class struggle and enables workers to act with unity and strength. If you are a Socialist then the first step is to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We are not a sect or a cult. There are no intellectuals in the Party, only intelligent men and women who share the same class interests, Socialist ideas and Socialist objective. However, we only want members who agree with the Socialist case and if you do agree with us then we want you as a member.

### **What Next?**

If you agree with the Socialist case then the next step is to apply for membership. We have no leaders. No one will tell you what to do and to think. All we expect is political commitment and enthusiasm to work with other Socialists to achieve the establishment of Socialism. Joining the Socialist Party of Great Britain will be the single most important political decision you will make. One more Socialist is one less worker voting for capitalist parties like Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. A Socialist party with a growing membership will make an increasing impact on the political class struggle. If you want a world without unemployment, exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality you should seriously consider joining us. **ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP** to The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB.

## IS THE CLASS WAR OVER?

Politicians have long had to deal with the day-to-day problems of the class struggle, more popularly known as *the class war*. In the 19th century the Fabians and the Independent Labour Party, whose own radical liberalism they misleadingly referred to as "*Socialist*", set out various policies to reconcile the class struggle with the interests of British capitalism on the world market.

Foremost in attacking Marx's analysis and critique of capitalism was the mathematician and philosopher, Bertrand Russell. He inherited £20,000 a year from his parents' estate when he was 21 bringing in an income of £600 a year. A lot of money in those days. It allowed him a life of leisure and one of his many leisurely pursuits was the politics of social reform.

Russell went to Germany to meet representatives of the Social Democratic Party. He wrote a book from his experiences called "German Social Democracy". He also gave a series of lectures on Marx to the Fabian Society.

For Russell the lesson to be learnt from his study of Socialism was that "*dogmatic Marxist theory*" should be avoided at all costs and the gradual reforms of the Fabians followed instead. He also advocated that governments should pursue liberal policies "*so that the detestable notion that class war is inevitable should find less acceptance, and less ground in the conduct of rulers*".

In his book, "*The Socialist Movement*", published before the First World War, Ramsay MacDonald echoed Russell's sentiments. In the section on the *Class War* he wrote:

*The idea of the class war no longer represents the motive forces organising Socialism and forming the Socialist Movement. Those who still*

*use it are like those more backwoods religious communities, which express their theologies in the terms, used before there was a science of geology.*  
p.150

MacDonald's target was the Socialism of the Socialist Party of Great Britain who saw the class struggle as a powerful force for historical change. MacDonald's rhetoric did not mention the role in the class struggle by capitalism's politicians, people like himself. He went on to lead a Labour government, which acted against the interests of workers. He also led a National Government during the early 1930's, which cut unemployment benefits, cut the pay of workers employed by the government and introduced means testing. MacDonald may have denied the class war but when administrating the affairs of the capitalist class he had no option but to attack the interests of workers.

Throughout the 20th century other Labour Party leaders also announced the death of the class war. Richard Crosland in "**The Future of Socialism**" (1956) believed capitalism to have changed so much since Marx's day it was now out of date. More recently the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, also declared the class war to be over.

He told the Labour Party conference in September 1999:

*The class war is over. The 21st century will not be about the battle between capitalism and socialism but between the forces of progress and the forces of conservatism.*

Is there any substance in Tony Blair's assertion? None whatsoever.

Look at the Labour government's own contribution to the class war.



- o Lecturing workers not to take pay rises.
- o Attacking sections of the working class; teachers, doctors and local government workers.
- o Threatening to use interest rates against workers with mortgages.
- o An assault upon single parent mothers, the disabled, refugees, the elderly, the sick and the unemployed.

The Labour government is like a bully strutting around the political playground picking on the weak and the defenceless but running scared from **Sun** editorials and the social conservatism screeched out by the preachers at the **Daily Mail**.

When it comes to the rich, the Labour government is in craven awe. It begs for their money. Quangoes are filled with businessmen and women. Government ministers praise "*entrepreneurs*". Labour prostrates itself to the CBI and the Institute of Directors. Labour MPs take up lucrative consultancy work and directorships in PR companies who ply their trade around Westminster. When the rich, the powerful and the wealthy say "*jump*", the Labour government asks "*how high*".

### **Labour serving Capitalism**

How do we know the Labour government sides with the capitalist class and serves its interests? A recent study by the Democratic Audit at Essex University supplies the answer.

The bias of Labour towards employers is shown by the composition of the 2,500 members who make up its "*task forces*". The City and big business predominate. For example, the banker, Adrian Montague, and eleven other merchant bankers act as a "*project team*" alongside five Treasury officials on the Private Finance Initiative task force.

On the DTI's 26 task forces some three-quarters of the places are occupied by

private business. Policy forums on exports and export promotions are confined to outside members representing private business and officials of various kinds.

Business interests tend to dominate significant task forces according to Professor Stuart Weir, the Director of Democratic Audit. The Better Regulation task force is chaired by Labour peer, Lord Hoskins of Northern Foods. Professor Weir writes:

*Nine of the task force members are from private business. Similarly a motor industry spokesman, Ian McAllister of Ford (whose task force recently went on strike), is joint chair with a minister of the Cleaner Vehicles Task Force, established to promote environmentally friendly motoring (Independent, 23 November 1999). As Stephen Byers told the Commons (2 March 2000): "The Labour government puts the interests of business first."*

Is this a stakeholding culture of inclusion meritocracy, open democracy and citizenship? The Labour government believes it represents *joined-up inclusive politics*. Inclusive, that is, of employers and their political representatives. Which, of course, is as it should be under capitalism. If Tony Blair really did believe the class war is over why doesn't he repeal the Tories anti-trade union legislation? And what is "inclusive" about the institution of private property ownership? It is a class monopoly.

It is ironic that Blair also continues Thatcher's mantra: "*There is no alternative*" to the market, to the profit motive, and to the exploitation of the working class. It is a conservative politics, both dogmatic and doctrinaire.

The class war continues despite what Tony Blair thinks or says. So when does the class war end? It ends with the replacement of capitalism with Socialism. When there are no more competing interests between a class buying labour power and a class selling labour power there will be no further class conflict

This is the alternative the Labour government wants to deny. Labour wants to deny the practical alternative of a social system without employers and without employees. They want change but only change within the contours of capitalism. Reaction is the force of conservatism over which the Tories do not necessarily have a monopoly.

### Ending the Class War

Margaret Thatcher once made everyone laugh by telling us that Harold Macmillan had almost ended the class struggle. Tony Blair created mirth by stating at the 1999 Labour Conference that *the class war was over*. Now Lord Healey claims that the former Labour Prime Minister, Clement Atlee *"practically ended the class war in Britain by introducing the welfare state"* (Times 26 February 2000).

Not only does Healey conveniently forget that the architect of the welfare was in fact Lord Beveridge, a liberal, but he also forgets that Clement Atlee's government sent in troops against the Dockers (1945, 1948 and 1949) and Smithfield workers (1950) in order to break their respective strikes. In fact the Labour government of 1945-1951 intervened on at least 14 occasions to using troops to break strikes (**Troops in Strikes**, S Peak, The Cobden Trust 1984).

**The Manchester Guardian** at the time, wrote of Atlee's government:

*There used to be a healthy distaste for the use of troops in strikes. Nowadays the Ministry of Labour seems almost an appendage to the service departments, and whenever it has an awkward dispute on its hands the army is called in as a matter of course. "Join the army and see Smithfield" is a current Cockney witticism ... It is a scathing commentary on the Labour Government's handling of labour problems that it should rely continually on the services (June 1950).*

Politicians might deny the existence of the class war or claim it is over but in their day-to-day administration of capitalism they are forced time and again to attack the interests of the working class. The class war only ends with the establishment of Socialism.

## A QUESTION OF CLASS

There are few topics about which such confusion reigns than that of class. This situation arises through a combination of wishful thinking and deliberate deception.

Socialists maintain that capitalism is divided into two distinct and separate classes. On the one hand there is a working class majority, which is propertyless and forced to sell its labour power to employers in return for a wage or salary. During the production process workers are exploited producing more wealth than they receive in earned income. On the other hand, there is a class of capitalists who do not work but do own and control the means of production. Unlike workers, employers live off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

The difference in living standards between the capitalist and the worker ought to be obvious to everyone. However, there are still those who deny the existence of classes altogether, or at least maintain that class distinctions are withering away. Then there are those who recognise social divisions but muddy the waters by identifying not two but many classes, including "*middle classes*", "*professional classes*" and the "*underclass*". A recent *New Statesman* article by A Adonis (3 October 1997) entitled "*Our Classless Self-Delusion*", and a book by A Adonis and S Pollard (*A Class Act*, 1997) exemplify this conclusion.

The former Prime Minister, John Major, is a good example of the first kind. In his own words his aim was an "*opportunity society*" in which there are "*ladders enabling citizens to rise to whatever level their own abilities and good fortune may take them from whatever their starting point*". It seems to have entirely escaped him that this assumes that classes do and will continue to exist. The fact that barriers can be surmounted in exceptional cases does not prove but confirms the existence of class.



In contrast Adonis and Pollard provide useful ammunition against John Major and his like by pointing out some of the vast inequalities of wealth which exist today, inequalities which would be inconceivable in a genuinely classless society. However, they spoil all this evidence by believing there is a gradation of classes within capitalism. They say:

*Far from diminishing, class divisions are intensifying as the distance between top and bottom widens and the classes at both extremes grow in size and identity (A Class Act, p.ix).*

Classes at both extremes imply other classes in between, and clearly different sections of the working class are being considered as separate classes. No useful purpose would be served by detailed criticism of all the concepts of class presented and attention will be confined to four topics - the "*super class*", the "*middle class*", the "*under class*" and the "*public-private sector divide*".

### **The Super Class**

Adonis and Pollard claim that a new "*super-class*" of "*top private sector professionals and managers, mega-salaried, London-based and profoundly convinced of itself as a benign meritocracy*" has superseded the aristocracy as the ruling class. In fact, the landed aristocracy has been a spent force for decades; relics such as the royal family remain by courtesy of the capitalist class, while others have become capitalists.

There has certainly been much attention given recently to the very high salaries and benefits paid to "*fat cat*" directors. Clearly these are high enough to relieve the individuals of any further necessity to seek employment; hence the recipients have been elevated to the capitalist class whether they continue to "*work*" or not. In any case this "*work*" concerns administration, take-over and redundancies, necessary under capitalism but not part of the productive process. The capitalist class has gained new recruits, but others have dropped down into the working class. There is nothing unusual in this.

## The Middle Class

The concept of the middle class had some justification during the establishment of capitalism when the capitalist class was struggling for domination against Feudalism. Between the aristocracy at the top and the feudal serfs and the growing class of wage slaves at the bottom, there were the early capitalists as a propertied class though still politically subservient to the aristocracy. This justification has long since disappeared and the term middle class, though subject to many confusing interpretations, is generally applied in a very imprecise way to the "*upper section*" of the working class. Managers, civil servants and white collar workers generally consider themselves, wrongly as it happens, middle class. Manual workers and those living on state benefits generally consider themselves, and are considered (correctly), working class.

For some time the number of physically demanding jobs considered to be working class has been in decline while the advance of the service sector has meant a corresponding increase in so-called "*sedentary*" jobs. This led John Mortimer (*Daily Mail*, 18 June 1996) to say, absurdly, that:

*The present class system is a "fat cat" upper middle class, a huge middle class and an underclass. There is no working class any more.*

And a BBC television report (January 1996) erroneously said:

*The proportion of working class people enjoying a middle class life style is large and rising.*

The fact that such statements can be made at all shows that the so-called middle class is merely part of the working class, which appears to becoming more homogeneous. Interestingly, 61% of the respondents to a 1995 MORI poll described themselves as working class whereas only 43% answered thus to a similar Gallup poll in 1949, despite a sea change in employment patterns in favour of occupations previously considered "*middle class*".

In the same MORI poll 81% answered "yes" to the question "*do you think there is a class struggle in this country or not*". Hopefully these trends mean that the "*middle class*" myth has had its day, the development of capitalism itself having revealed its absurdity.

The expression "*working class*" applies to all those who have to sell their labour power in order to live, whether they are highly paid lawyers, accountants, doctors or semi-skilled or unskilled manual labourers.

### **The Under Class**

The term "*under class*" is relatively new compared with "*middle class*". The concept behind it is, however, similar to that of a lumpen proletariat, which was used by Engels to describe what was largely a petty criminal element within the 19th century working class. Today the term under-class is mainly used to describe the least fortunate members of capitalism, such as the long-term unemployed and the homeless. Some of these have taken to petty crime to supplement the meagre income provided by the benefit system, which is itself subject to further cuts. However, this category cannot be considered a separate class. Its membership fluctuates with the trade cycle as more find work in boom time and more are forced into unemployment in slumps, forming an industrial reserve army which is a permanent feature of capitalism. The under-class is part of the working class, forming its bottom layer.

### **Private versus Public "*Divide*"**

Both the article and the book devote much space to what is seen by the authors as a private v public sector class divide. Socialists emphasise that employment by the state is no different from working for a private employer and there is no need to repeat these arguments here. Adonis and Pollard try to justify their stance by drawing attention to the difference in pay levels, pointing out that the "*super-class*" professionals on mega-salaries are all in the private sector. This

is neither here nor there. Our point is that workers interface with state organisations in exactly the same way as they do with private firms: as wage slaves.

The class division within modern capitalism, between capitalists and workers, is not changing significantly, despite what Adonis and Pollard claim. The "*super-class*", which they see as a new ruling class, is at most a recent addition to the capitalist class. The so-called "*middle class*" consists almost entirely of workers and, despite changes in employment patterns and terminology since those times, this applies to the way in which this term has been used at least since the 1920's. The "*under-class*" has similarities with the lumpenproletariat, a term used in the time of Marx and Engels, but which mainly consists of the industrial reserve army and the most unfortunate members of the present working class.

The real concern of Adonis and Pollard is that public sector workers tend to support the Labour Party to a greater extent than those in the private sector and they are concerned, as Labour supporters, that the ability of the private sector to offer higher salaries could lead to Labour losing support. Need we say more?

## Conclusion

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## FALSIFYING HISTORY

During the 1960's and 1970's students in departments of philosophy, politics and history came across political organisations formed at the turn of the 20th century. As these students passed through the academic system they appropriated these groups for their degree thesis, doctorate and subsequent academic career.

The consequence was a mini-industry of conferences, seminars, journals and the ubiquitous publication of the book, in whose preface the author would name his friends, in the bibliography the citations of all his friends' books and articles, and on the dust cover the publisher would insert a few lines of praise by his friends of this or that university. Socialists were then confronted with a litany of the living dead; the IWW, Situationists, anarcho-communists, council communists, and an array of direct action groups associated with all shades of anarchism. AK publications lists thousands of books and pamphlets by these groups, known euphemistically as the Libertarian Left.

The old Socialist Party of Great Britain was unfortunately dragged into this academic politics. Students from the fag-end of the 1960's student movement joined the Party. Some used their time to build academic careers and write pompous letters to the press. Others plotted and schemed against Socialists within the Party. Others ended up on a voyage from Socialism to the politics of the far right to finally advocate the privatisation of the air we breathe, in some crazy conservative pressure group.

One misfortune for the SPGB was the publication in 1987 of **Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**, edited by Maximilien Rubel, and John Crump, in which an unsuccessful attempt was made to bring the SPGB in line with various direct action and anarchist groups identified above. Not only was this a deceitful attempt to falsify history, but the book also received an uncritical and fawning review in the **Socialist Standard** of the time.

And so the academic industry goes on and on. A recent addition has been the publication of **Radical Theories: Paths beyond Marxism and Social Democracy** by D Schecter who teaches in the School of European Studies, University of Sussex. In the acknowledgements there is a citation to one Adam Buick "*for his comments and criticisms*". Mr Buick was a signatory to *Where We Stand*, an attempt by non-Socialists in the mid-1970's to change the Party to an anarchist and reformist bent and he later became the chief architect in the expulsion in 1991 of Socialists from the old SPGB.

The book is divided into six sections: Revolutionary Syndicalism, Anarchism, Council Communism, Guild Socialism, Market Socialism and Green and post-industrial Socialism. In the conclusion, the author comes out in favour of *Communitarian Anarchism* as offering "*the most coherent theoretical solution*" (p.185). There is neither discussion of The Socialist Party of Great Britain nor its criticism of anarchism in all its manifestations. The political programme of the SPGB is also ignored. So much for Mr Buick's input.

The reconstituted SPGB reaffirmed its total rejection to any group or organisation, which did not practically deal with the machinery of government. The theories explored by Dr Schecter are not radical nor do they open up a path for the working class away from the debris of state capitalism and the failed politics of the Labour Party with its emphasis on the "*discipline of competition and the rigour of the market*".

The poverty of the book is exemplified by the bibliography. A whole list of academics and political theorists are cited whose sum contribution to Socialist thought, save that of Marx, is about zero. Socialism will have to be the work of more than those who live in the hothouse of the university. Professors cannot make a Socialist revolution. Theory by itself does nothing.

As Marx noted: *Theory will be realised in a people only in so far as it is the realisation of their needs* (**Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right**).

## PROFITS BEFORE SAFETY

*"Death train firm puts profits before safety", cries out the Times (12 May 2000).*

A train company involved in the Paddington rail crash has paid shareholders almost as much in dividends as it would have cost to prevent the disaster.

Thames Trains rejected plans to introduce an £8.2m safety system to stop trains that pass red signals because cost benefit analysis - an obscene theory of economics - estimated that the expenditure would have saved only one life, presumably the driver's, valued at £2.5m.

*"In the two years after the firm (Thames Trains) decided against the system", writes the Times reporter, "£7.5m was paid to shareholders, but 31 lives were lost".* Those balancing profit against loss of life did not take into account the reality of transport system: when a crash occurs it is usually more than the driver that gets killed. In the case of the Paddington crash 31 lives were lost when a Thames train passed a red light outside Paddington station in October 1999.

As for the driver who was killed, he had just qualified. It cost too much money to have an experienced driver sit with him for a few months. He was not told that the company had decided that they had based investment strategies in health and safety on the assumption about the cost of one life as against their profits. He was not told that profits were put before safety. He's dead.

But then this is capitalism. The capitalist system defended by the Labour Government who naively believe profit-making does not contradict safety and meeting human needs. Tell that to the widow of the train driver, Mr Prescott!

Now Labour know if they didn't know already. Profit first, safety last. But don't expect them to do anything about it. They exist to serve the interests of employers, not workers. Profit before need. Profit before people. Profit before safety.

## WORLD CAPITALISM IN CHAOS

World capitalism is in chaos. Social reforms have been checked by social reaction. Politics is held in cynical contempt. And economics is considered theoretically bankrupt as millions and millions of workers find themselves unemployed.

The euphoria, which met the collapse of state capitalism, has all but evaporated. For a brief moment defenders of western capitalism such as Francis Fukuyama (author of **The End of History** and **The Great Disruption**) pointed to a new world order in which there would be universal peace and free trade.

The reality of world capitalism is altogether different. *All is flux; nothing stays still*, wrote the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus. The poet, Yeats wrote, *Things fall apart, the centre does not hold*. Both are apt descriptions for the world in which we live. Politicians want consensus and partnership. The reality of capitalism subverts these intentions at every twist and turn.

However, it was Marx who captured the historical significance of capitalism's anarchic movement through history propelled by class struggle and class conflict. He wrote:

*There followed on the birth of mechanization and modern industry ... a violent encroachment like that of an avalanche in its intensity and extent. All bounds of morals and nature, of age and sex, day and night, were broken down (Capital Vol.I).*

The *avalanche* caused by capitalism's never-ending drive for profit and capital accumulation continues to this day. Political promises and social reforms are buried and lost without trace.

Political and economic stability. This is what politicians want but which



capitalism disrupts. All capitalist politics ends in failure. As Marx and Engels made clear in the **Communist Manifesto**:

*"All that is solid melts into air."*

The importance of the **Communist Manifesto** should not be underestimated. The **Communist Manifesto** is a manifesto for our time. Within its pages are insights to understand the chaos of capitalism, to make some sense of history and to then determine where we want to go.

*All that is solid melts into air*". It is a powerful and evocative image. Solidity - the appearance of solidity and permanence turns out not to be the case. What seems to be eternal is in fact transient and passing. Here is the whole passage in question:

*"All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned and men at last are forced to face with sober senses the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men."*

Capitalism does and will create Socialists. Workers will be forced by the circumstances in which they live to look at capitalism as it really is and understand that a system based on commodity production and exchange for profit can never be run in their interests.

### **Capitalism's Anarchic Development**

To critics of Marx like Karl Popper, (**The Poverty of History and Conjectures and Refutations**), who ridiculed Marx's predictions, the **Communist Manifesto** remains as a monument to their own intellectual poverty.

In the **Manifesto** the following social development is historically sketched out. The emergence of a world market based upon commodity production and exchange for profit. Communication and transport become widespread and rapid. Capitalism is concentrated into fewer hands. Production is centralised and becomes dependent upon skilled, co-operative social labour. The world is divided up into competing nation states leading to conflict and war over trade routes, strategic points of influence and raw materials. And there is the growth of class-consciousness among workers, first in the establishment of trade unions, then politically, with the establishment of a Socialist party.

Once this process has been completed we are left with two antagonistic classes; capital and labour, both locked in a class struggle, which can only be resolved politically by social revolution and the establishment of Socialism. This is the historical vista opened up by the **Manifesto** and it is a vista capitalist politics wants to close. It cannot be done.

Capitalism has created a process for permanent change, perpetual upheaval and renewal in every aspect of personal and social life. Capitalists cannot stand still. They cannot have solidity and consensus because they are pushed on by competition and are forced to innovate. As Marx noted:

*The capitalist class cannot exist except by constantly revolutionising the means of production.*

Like the shark, capitalism cannot stand still.

This quotation is important to remember because it stresses the continuous upheaval to society caused by capitalism.

*Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the*

*bourgeois epoch from all earlier times. All fixed, fast-frozen relationships, with their train of venerable ideas and opinions, are swept away; all new-formed ones become obsolete before they can ossify.*

### **The Inability to Stand Still**

The inability of capitalists to stand still has accelerated throughout the 20th century. Capitalism blindly leads and capitalist politics follows. In one generation capitalism has undergone global upheaval and revolutionising of production and communications. To which capitalist politics has been unable to give order and coherence. Politicians do not know where Capitalism is going. What of the state of play at the beginning of the 21st century?

First, the increasing concentration of capital. During the last generation the world's largest multi-national corporations have grown seven-fold in sales. They employ 26 million workers. In 1971 total sales were \$721 billion growing to £5.2 trillion in 1991. At the same time capital was able to increase its output by increasing workers' productivity and the intensity of exploitation..

Second, globalisation. Companies investing capital in foreign countries, buying existing assets or building new factories has increased rapidly over the last fifteen years. The volume of foreign direct investment nearly quadrupled during the 1980's reaching \$2 trillion by the early 1990's. The largest portion of capital flow, about \$255 billion, went into the US.

Third, the international character of production. The computer on which this article is being typed has been put together by workers around the world both in its design and its fabrication. Car production is also a world-wide manufacturing process. There are many others.

Fourth, the growth of finance capital. International bank loans more than quadrupled from 1980 to 1991, reaching some \$3.6 trillion. There was a

similar expansion in global bond financing. The global exchange markets on national currencies totalled more than \$1.2 trillion a day in the early 1990's from only \$640 billion a day as recently as 1989. The entire global volume of traded financial assets (about \$24 trillion) is turned over every 24 hours a day.

And, fifth, the labour market. It too has become global both in its instability and restlessness. Workers are forced to migrate over the continents of the world in search of work. The United Nations estimates that out of a world labour force of some 3 billion, 150 million are unemployed and a further 800 million are underemployed (**International Labour Office** 1999). However, the unemployed are not there, as Malthus and his followers claim, as a result of more people than there is food to keep them alive. Rather, there are more people than capitalism needs to make a profit and so the surplus population is deprived of the wages on which workers depend for their existence. Capitalism creates artificial scarcity.

### Outgrowing Capitalism

Companies locate around the world looking for cheap labour. A New York financier recently remarked that "*Capital has wings*". He went on to say:

*Capital can deal with twenty labour markets at once and pick and choose among them.*

He believes labour is fixed in one place and that workers can be played off against each other. Power would favour the buyer and not the seller of labour power.

This is highly optimistic. More wishful thinking than reality. Workers throughout the world do organise together to pool common economic interests by creating organisations like The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). In developing countries, often against political suppression,



workers do organise into trade unions just as workers in Western Europe and the US had to in the 19th and early 20th century. Labour is and will increasingly become international in its understanding, awareness and organisation capacity. Workers will have to "*face with sober sense the real conditions of their lives*". They have no option. Capitalism has forced them into trade unions to protect their interests just as it will force them into Socialist politics to advance their interests by replacing capitalism with Socialism.

Already many workers move from one national labour market to another. Building workers, doctors, academics and other specialist workers move across frontiers. With the development of capitalism into a fully integrated global market, the class struggle will become more international in its scope and intensity.

Not that Socialists share the same view of the future of the national state and national politics as some commentators do. Global markets might exist but industrial and finance capital have not freed themselves from dependency on a nation state. Multi-nationals are vulnerable to war, conflict, nationalisation and anti-trust legislation. Finance capital likewise. Both forms of capital need the protection of the nation state. Nation states are still the political unit within capitalism with new nations coming into being rather than less. The nation state only becomes superfluous with the establishment of Socialism.

And until workers establish Socialism, capitalism will always destroy the human possibilities it creates. It fosters discord and change. It also forces self-development but only in a restricted and distorted way.

Capitalism compels everything to grow or die. The irony is that in forcing change it also creates the tendency for people to want to outgrow capitalism itself. This tendency expresses itself in discontent, in questioning and in the formal expression of Socialist ideas and organisation. As the class struggle deepens so workers will see commodity production and exchange as an

impediment on their own growth and development. When they do this they will want to organise different social relationships, ones not based upon exchange.

*In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we will have an association in which the free development of each will be the condition for the free development of all (Communist Manifesto).*

### **The Position of the Workers**

In presenting the case for Socialism we are not seeking to construct "a brave new world" on a plan built by us out of dreams and longings. What we have to say we know from studying the world we live in. We are Socialists as a result of trying to find practical solutions for our problems. Non-socialists are also aware of these evils, but we differ from them in recognising that the evils are bound up with the capitalist system and cannot be avoided under it, and that it is possible to replace Capitalism by Socialism (**Questions of the Day**, 1942).

### **CYBER SOCIALISM**

We have begun the process of setting up a domain name, e-mail address and web site which should be in place by the end of the year. More details will be given in the next issue of Socialist Studies.

## WAS THE CLASS STRUGGLE INVENTED?

Marx is often accused of inventing the class struggle. This is arrant nonsense. In a letter to Joseph Weydemeyer (5 March 1852) he wrote:

*As to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering either the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of the class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes* (Marx/Engels, **Selected Correspondence**, Moscow 1975, p.64).

Marx, then, did not invent the class struggle. He was made aware of its existence from three separate lines of descent. First, the French and English economists (Quesnay, Smith, Ricardo), second, the mainly French historians (Guizot, Thierry), whose writings supported the employers rather than criticising them and, third, from his own experience of the working class when in exile in France and then in Britain where Engels had already written his classic *'The Condition of the Working Class'* (1844) and the Chartists were agitating for their Six-Point Charter to give the working class the vote.

### Origins of the Working Class Struggle

Workers were taking both economic and political action long before Marx came onto the scene.

In his book, **Customs and Commons**, E P Thompson illustrates one of the earliest surviving trade union cards. The card was filed among the Crown's affidavits when wool combers were prosecuted in 1725 in Alton, Hampshire. The union referred to itself as a charity and claimed to have been founded in 1700.

One of the first political responses outside direct action and confrontation with the state was undertaken by the National Union of the Working Classes and Others in the early 1830's.

A brief account of the National Union of the Working Classes and Others, which was founded in April 1831, is to be found in Chapter IV of **A Social and Industrial History of England 1815-1918**, by J F Rees, MA, lecturer on Economic History in the University of Edinburgh (published by Methuen, 1920).

A campaign with massive popular support had been organised by the Radicals to force the Duke of Wellington's government to pass the 1831 Reform Bill. The National Union was formed in April 1831 to oppose the campaign.

Rees says:

*It must not be supposed ... that the Radicals had the working class solidly behind them. There grew up in the course of the contest a very formidable opposition to the Bill, particularly among the advanced sections of workingmen in London and Lancashire. The centre of opposition in London was the National Union of the Working Classes and Others.*

The Bill when enacted in 1832, did not extend the franchise to the workers so the National Union's view was that it would actually make the workers' position worse because "*political power would be given to the very class ... which according to the analysis of society which they accepted, they were necessarily opposed. In short, they objected to the general enfranchisement of their employers*".

The National Union wanted *universal franchise* because they saw it as the way towards social reconstruction.

Some of the National Union's ideas derived from Robert Owen but without "*Owen's antipathy to political reform*".



Thomas Hodgkin's **Labour Defended Against The Claims of Capital**, published in 1825, was also influential (Marx described this text as *this advanced work*).

The National Union was still in existence in 1841 in which year they issued a statement summarising their aims. Rees comments:

*The National Union put forward, in November 1841, a declaration, which reveals its debt to the doctrines of the French revolution on the one hand, and is an interesting anticipation of Chartism on the other. All men, they stated, are born free and equal and possess a number of rights natural and inalienable. Among these is the right to the whole product of their labour. This is a reference to a theory, which was taught by Thomas Hodgskin (1783-1869), and exercised a profound influence on working class opinion long before it was taken up and elaborated by Karl Marx.*

And of Marx we only have to recall his observation written in **The Communist Manifesto**:

*Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeois and proletariat.*

The class struggle, as Marx noted, is a *political struggle*. Since the time workers became conscious that they had different interests from their employers workers have acted economically through trade unions and politically through many trials and errors to the politically class-conscious position of The Socialist Party of Great Britain.

## A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

On 15 September 1990 Camden Branch, then in the old Socialist Party of Great Britain, published a polemical attack on anarcho-reformists in the Party who had urged the working class to support the Solidarity movement in Poland. Solidarity went on to form a capitalist government which attacked the interests of the working class. The Camden Branch response "*About the Polish political organisation, Solidarity*" is printed below.

That a group of anarcho-reformists were able to gain control of the old SPGB and engineer the 'split' which led to our reconstitution of the Party came at the end of a long and unhappy period of internal turmoil.

If Socialists do not want their Party to be taken over by anti-Socialists then they must ensure that only convinced Socialists join the organisation and that a majority of the Party continue to take an active role in the Party's affairs. Apathy and obsession with growth in numbers contributed to the problems of the 1970's and 1980's, which allowed a watering down of the Socialist case. The Object and Declaration of Principles has to be actively defended in its entirety and it is an obligation on members of the SPGB to do so.

It has taken the reconstitution of the SPGB in June 1991 to sort out the mess and set the Party on the correct footing again. We have therefore made it absolutely clear to anyone wishing to join the Party that they must accept the Party's name, history, identity and Object and Declaration of Principles. We are not elitists. We only ask for a Party of like-minded Socialists working with one aim in mind: the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with Socialism.

15th September 1990

## ABOUT THE POLISH POLITICAL ORGANISATION. SOLIDARITY

### 1. CAMDEN BRANCH RESOLUTION, AUGUST 1990

Camden Branch calls on the Executive Committee to repudiate past statements made in the name of the Party, in direct conflict with the Declaration of Principles, expressing approval and support for the capitalist political organisation, Solidarity, which now constitutes the government of Poland; for example the statement in the leaflet "*Solidarity .... and the crisis of Polish State Capitalism*" which read:

"By their principled and democratic actions, the workers in Solidarity have won the admiration and support of Socialists."

(Note This leaflet, published in December 1981, was reproduced as an article in the **Socialist Standard** (SS) January 1982, with only minor alterations.)

The leaflet and the article both described Solidarity as a "*working class organisation*".

### 2. The claim that Solidarity was a trade union

(a) It was the practice in some quarters to call Solidarity a trade union. For example the **Socialist Standard**, November 1981: "*Solidarity is not a revolutionary organisation. It is a trade union whose role is to defend workers interests within the wages system*".

A manifesto issued by a group of "*Solidarity activists*" which was published in the **Daily Mail** (5th January 1982) described it as "*a 10 million strong union*" supported "*by a vast majority of the nation*".

### 3. Solidarity was always a political organisation

(a) A **Times** correspondent in Poland (14th December 1981) said:

Solidarity was registered as an independent trade union on November 10th 1980. But it is not really a trade union. It is in its own words "*a social movement*".

(b) Another **Times** correspondent in Poland (**Times** 8th January 1982) referred to "*the growing strength of Solidarity, and its emergence as a de facto political opposition*".

(c) And the **Socialist Standard**, December 1982, stated that their leader Lech Walesa, had been "*unable to prevent it developing into a political opposition*".

### 4. Solidarity membership

If Solidarity had been a trade union its membership would have been wage and salary earners and it would have been engaged in pressing their claims in respect of wages and conditions of work, against their employers.

But according to the **Socialist Standard** (December 1982) Solidarity's membership "*includes almost all sections of the population including 'intellectuals', shopkeepers, farmers and students. Its demands were mostly for Labour Party-type reforms. While some of these were of a Welfare-State nature, others were for economic reforms in the 'national interest'*".

These farmers own three-quarters of the land in Poland (**Socialist Standard** April 1981). What interest would they have in joining Solidarity if it had been a trade union of wage earners?



If Solidarity had been a trade union it would not have had anything like 10 million members and would not have been backed "by a vast majority of the nation".

#### 5. Some other statements about Solidarity in the Socialist Standard

(a) The following appeared in the **Socialist Standard**, January 1981

*"In an interview in the Guardian (3rd November 1980) Eva, a leading dissident intellectual, was asked what sort of society does Solidarity really want? Eva hesitated. 'I suppose people differ, but very few of us could be called Socialists at all. We would even welcome multinationals and big combines. In theory we would not mind having capitalism back - not on the American pattern but like Sweden or Denmark.'"*

(b) *"The Union which these workers established ... (Solidarity) was a well-organised and democratic union of workers who deserve the support and admiration of the workers of the world (Socialist Standard, April 1981)."*

(c) *"Some of the Polish rebels have naively assumed that they are living in a Socialist society and that their troubles would be over if they could transfer Poland into a western style capitalist state (April 1981 SS)."*

#### 6. Question and answer in the Socialist Standard December 1980

A correspondent wrote to the **Socialist Standard** asking about the Party's attitude to non-socialist organisations.

*"But supposing there was a chance that a limited democracy (as we have in our country) could be brought about in Russia, through pressure from other non-socialist groups - whether they be humanist, civil rights, left-wing, religious or whatever - what would be your position? Support or not?"*

In their reply the Editors wrote:

*"What is happening in Poland, for example, will happen sooner or later in other state capitalist countries. We must support such efforts by workers because they are a first step towards securing democratic rights."*

#### **7. What the Reply ought to have said**

(a) The Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain affirms in Clause 7 that the Party seeking working class emancipation" must be hostile to every other party and in Clause 8 the Party's determination *"to wage war against all other political parties whether allegedly labour or avowedly capitalist"*.

(b) The reply to the correspondent, in accordance with our Declaration of Principles ought to have informed him that we always call upon workers wherever they may be, to seek to form a Socialist party with Principles on the lines of our own. And that such a Party in Poland or in any other country, would declare its total opposition to such capitalist organisations as Solidarity.

(c) The Editors' justification for committing the Party to support for such non-socialist political movements, i.e. that they *"are a first step towards securing democratic rights"*, is historically baseless.

Under the compelling pressure of the class-struggle inherent within capitalism, the working class have always responded with action of some kind. They have never waited for *"legal permission"*.

Trade Unions existed and functioned in this country long before they were given limited legal status in 1824 (see pamphlet **Trade Unions**, p. 16). Illegal strikes have been a continuing feature of trade union history. And though workers did not get the vote until 1867 and 1884 they were carryi

on political and other activities, some of them specifically illegal, long before these Reform Acts.

In his book "The Making of the English Working Class", E P Thompson wrote:

*"When every caution has been made, the outstanding fact of the period between 1790 and 1830 is the formation of the 'working class' .... By 1832 there were strongly based and self-conscious working class institutions - trade unions, friendly societies, educational and religious movements, political organisations, periodicals and working class intellectual traditions, working class community pattern, and a working class structure of feeling" (pp.212-3).*

### **Solidarity: A POSTSCRIPT**

The argument that Socialists should form a tactical alliance with non-Socialist groups in demanding "democratic rights" in one-party states like the Soviet bloc was one which we opposed on principle.

Events since then have shown we were right. In the former Soviet bloc, where workers can, if they wish, organise independent Socialist parties, they give their support to a variety of capitalist parties. Their agenda is only about reform, not the ending of the capitalist system.

Democracy, in itself, cannot solve the problems of the working class. Unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and other evil effects of capitalism remain, no matter whether the form of its political administration be democratic or dictatorial. Freedom to cry working class misery from the house-tops will not, in itself, abolish that misery ...

Democracy for the working class can only be consolidated and extended to the extent that the working class adopts a socialist standpoint. To renounce Socialism so that democracy may be defended, means ultimately the renunciation of both Socialism and democracy (SPGB pamphlet, *Questions of the Day*, 1942 edition).

## STALINIST HISTORIAN TRIES TO APOLOGISE

Professor Eric Hobsbawn, fellow of Birkbeck College, member of the Athenaeum Club and ex-member of the now defunct British Communist Party has not apologised to Socialists for his support of Russian State capitalism in his latest book **The New Century**. The nearest he comes to an apology is the following admission:

*I know very well that the cause I embraced has proved not to work. Perhaps I shouldn't have chosen it. But, on the other hand, if people don't have any ideal of a better world, then they have lost something.*

As a member of the Communist Party, Hobsbawn did his best to ridicule any historical writing by members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain as "*vulgar Marxism*" (**What do Historians owe to Karl Marx**, 1969). He also wrote the SPGB out of history. His famous book, **Labour's Turning Point 1880-1900**, for example, conveniently falls short of 1904 when he would have been forced to deal with the establishment of the SPGB, which would have been inconvenient to his political masters.

So, while a member of the Communist Party, Professor Hobsbawn did lose something. His integrity.

### The Russian Dictatorship

The Bolshevik attempt to usher in Socialism by "*legal enactment*" and by "*bold leaps*" before the economic conditions are ripe, and before the mass of the mass of the population desired Socialism, has been a total failure. In course of time that failure will become obvious to the workers inside and outside of Russia (**Questions of the Day 1942**, p66).



## LECTURE SERIES 2000

We are pleased to announce the following lectures for our 2000-01 series. Apologies for the bunching of meetings in November but other dates were not available. We look forward to seeing you.

**SUNDAY 15th October.**

**GREAT MEN. WARLORDS and the cult of the LEADER.**

Speaker: C. Skelton.

**SUNDAY 12th November.**

**SOCIALISM and BARBARISM.**

Speaker: R. Lloyd.

**SUNDAY 19th November.**

**The L.S.E. and Revolution in the City.**

Speaker: C. May

**SUNDAY 10th December.**

**KARL MARX and the S.P.G.B.**

Speaker: C. Devereux

Meetings commence 3 p.m.

**MARCHMONT COMMUNITY CENTRE**

62 Marchmont Street, London WC1.

(5 mins. Russell Square Tube Station).

- Questions and Discussion periods -

## THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

### **NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH**

meets at 7.30 pm on the first Monday in the month at  
Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, London NW6.

Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,  
London N12 8SB

### **CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH**

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at  
51 Argyle Street, London WC1 (5 mins Kings Cross Tube Station).

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities  
should contact the Secretary.

## LITERATURE AVAILABLE

**Socialist Studies** - our official journal

Issues Nos: 1 - 37 @ 50p each

**Socialist Principles Explained**

The Object and Declaration of Principles  
25 p.p. Pamphlet 75p

**Banking & Credit Myths**

A Socialist View 60p

**Socialist's Handbook** 75p

**Questions of the Day pamphlets:** - 50p each

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects

No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.

No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.

No.4. The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Trade Unions.

No.5. Why Socialists oppose the Labour Party.

No.6. The Continuing Trade War.

**The Materialist Conception of History** Price £1

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# THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

## OBJECT

*The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.*

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

### THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO—

The Socialist Party of Great Britain,

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB



## Why Capitalism Will Not Collapse

In the early 1930's much of the world was in the grip of an economic crisis. In some countries inflation was running high and unemployment condemned millions to the scrap heap. Capitalism was indeed struggling to survive and many Left-Wing parties and groups were heralding the collapse of the profit system and seemingly the right conditions for a social revolution.

Unrest was commonplace; unemployed workers were marching and demonstrating. In Great Britain the political scene was one of deep social problems to which the main political parties had no answer.

In 1932, in this charged atmosphere, a small group of workers, united together in the Socialist Party of Great Britain, published a pamphlet with the challenging, if not dogmatic title, "**Why Capitalism Will Not Collapse**". The pamphlet was met with derision; a typical contribution from the "*arm-chair philosophers of the SPGB*"; said the revolutionaries, already fancying their chances at the helm of the masses.

There can be no question that the stance taken by the SPGB was the correct one. Nearly 70 years later capitalism is still here, but some self-styled leaders of the working class still pedal the nonsense of the "*collapse*" theories. The pamphlet is available wherever we have a literature stand, or can be sent by post for 80p including postage (stamps will do). Please send your order to:

Socialist Party of Great Britain,

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

## HOW LOW CAN CLAPHAM SINK ?

We have received an application for membership from a former member of the Clapham 'socialist' party. She resigned from that organisation on the basis of 'disaffection' or in other words - disagreement. The minutes of their Executive Committee dated 5 August 2000 stated that she "had joined the Ashbourne Courtesans". Is their E.C. aware of the meaning of the word "Courtesan". According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word means... 'A prostitute especially one whose clients are wealthy and upper class'. Taking it on its face value, we can only assume that Clapham look upon their ex member as a prostitute, although we would stress that if this were true, that by joining us she will not come into contact with people who are wealthy or upper class. They might apologise to the person concerned, or to give them the benefit of their crass stupidity, do they look upon us as an organisation who is prostituting the very name of Socialism and betraying the socialist movement? We would be very welcome to debate the issue with them, although all attempts to debate in the past have been met with stony silence.